

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 517

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of Public Chapter 95 of 1921.

WHEREAS, on April 5, 1921, Governor Alfred A. Taylor signed into law Senate Bill 737, which became Public Chapter 95 of 1921, a law that gave the women of Tennessee the right to hold public office; and

WHEREAS, less than thirty years earlier, on April 29, 1893, the Tennessee Supreme Court had declared in *State ex rel. v. Davidson*, 92 Tenn 531; 22 S.W. 203, that "By the English or common law, no woman, under the dignity of a queen, could take part in the government of the State, and they could hold no office except parish office..."; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Supreme Court further stated that "Although a woman may be a citizen, she is not entitled, by virtue of her citizenship, to take any part in the government, either as a voter or as an officer, independent of legislation conferring such rights upon her.... It follows that unless there is some constitutional or legislative provision enabling her to hold office, she is not eligible to the same"; and

WHEREAS, in short, such ruling declared that although a woman was a citizen of the State, she had no right to vote or hold any elected office; and

WHEREAS, on April 17, 1919, Governor A. H. Roberts signed into law Public Chapter 139 of 1919, "AN ACT granting women the right to vote for electors of President and Vice President of the United States, and for municipal officers"; under this law, women in Tennessee could now vote in most elections, but the bar to holding public office remained; and

WHEREAS, in August 1920, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth and final state necessary to ratify the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution; women throughout the

United States were then able to vote in the November 1920 presidential election, but women in Tennessee still had no legal right to hold public office; and

WHEREAS, in a special election held in January 1921 to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Senator J. Parks Worley, his widow, Anna Lee Keys Worley, was elected by the voters of Sullivan and Hawkins counties as the first female member of any southern state legislature; and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 1921, Senator Anna Lee Keys Worley introduced Senate Bill 737, "AN ACT to make women eligible to hold public office in Tennessee"; the bill passed both houses and was signed into law on April 5, 1921; and

WHEREAS, since that time, more than 100 women have served in the Tennessee General Assembly, including the twenty-one women who are members of the 112th General Assembly, Senator Raumesh Akbari, Senator Heidi Campbell, Senator Brenda Gilmore, Senator Sara Kyle, Senator Becky Duncan Massey, Senator Katrina Robinson, Senator Dawn White, Representative Rebecca Alexander, Representative Karen Camper, Representative Michele Carringer, Representative Barbara Cooper, Representative Patsy Hazlewood, Representative Esther Helton, Representative Gloria Johnson, Representative London Lamar, Representative Mary Littleton, Representative Susan Lynn, Representative Debra Moody, Representative Iris Rudder, Representative Robin Smith, and Representative Terri Lynn Weaver; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we join in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the passage of Public Chapter 95 of 1921, which gave Tennessee women the right to hold public office.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to

the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.